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SOVIET POLICY IN KOREA

Soviet interest in the Korean peninsula stems from:

--its geographic proximity to China, Japan,
and the Soviet Union;

--and historical circumstances that have
made North Korea an arena for Soviet-
Chinese rivalry.

Moscow's efforts to strengthen its influence in North Korea
at China's expense have not been particularly successful,
however, because:

--the Chinese have been active themselves;

--Pyongyang has been able to use Sino-Soviet
rivalry to maintain a high degree of in-
dependence.

To compete with Peking, Moscow continues to give
military aid to North Korea and political support in the
UN and elsewhere.

--on the military side, aid has included high-
performance aircraft, tanks, guided missile
boats, and short-range tactical missiles.

--politically, Moscow renders pro forma
support to Pyongyang on the issue of
Korean unification, although the Soviets
have privately made it clear that they are
not sympathetic to some of Pyongyang's be-
havior and rhetoric. The Soviets have been
anxious that the Korean question in the UN
not seriously complicate their relationship
with the US.

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Moscow's equities in North Korea have limited its policy in South Korea. For a brief period in 1973 the Soviet Union seemed receptive to informal contacts with Seoul, but ceased in the face of Pyongyang's disapproval. Since that time the Soviet Union has sought to walk a careful line, trying to show flexibility on the Korean question without arousing North Korean suspicions. The results have not been impressive.

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